01530

1965/06/09

55

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

June 9, 1965

MEMO FOR McGeorge Bundy

Attached is a list of statements by Defense Department personnel concerning the mission of U. S. combat forces in Vietnam. Secretary McNamara's March 9 statement was made in response to a question during a background meeting with the press here in the Pentagon.

Copies of this list have also been sent under separate cover by Art Sylvester to George Reedy.

Joe

Joseph A. Califano, Jr.

Attachment

COPY LBJ LIBRARY

STATEMENTS CONCERNING MISSION OF U.S. COMBAT FORCES IN VIETNAM

MACV Spokesman, 5 December:

"About 150 U.S. marines have reported. Serve as internal security forces at Danang Air Base."

9 March, Secretary McNamara:

"...Serve as security force only. Patrol within narrow limits of the area and thus should not tangle with the VC. There may be VC infiltration attempts of course, and the marines will shoot if they are shot at."

"The two battalions (of marines) can only function as a security force."

8 March, MACV:

Press release at Danang. Quoting General Karch.

"...reinforcing defense of Danang airfield." "Marine helicopters operate in support of ARVN forces."

General Karch, Q&A: "Assist in defense of Danang air base."
"will be operating strictly in defensive role."
"will be patroling within zone we are assigned as defensive sector."
Distance from air base. "Depends on Gen Thi."

9 April, MACV Spokesman Saigon:

Q. "Are these going to be purely security troops?"

A. "Yes."

9 March, Gen Karch, Danang:

Q. "Will U.S. Marines train Vietnamese?"

A. "Sounds like a good idea, will be delighted to assist in training Vietnamese Marines."

COPY LBJ LIBRARY

9 March, MACV Spokesman, Saigon:

At dawn this AM planes of USMC medium helo sqdn HMM 162 began arriving here to further bolster marine units at Danang. Brigade was brought to SVN at request of GVN to serve as security element for Danang Air Base.

9 March, Gen Karch, Danang:

Q. "Will marines be used in any special forces type ground operations?"

A. "Don't forsee this."

Q. "What will helos be used for?"

A. "Only used to move marines around defense perimeter. Base security is primary mission."

28 April, MACV Spokesman, Saigon:

Referring to General Wallace M. Greene's press conference at plane-side at Danang.

"Marines will patrol out as far as they have to go."

MACV Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations in monthly Q&A news conference in Saigon, 4 June:

Q. "What is the combat mission of American troops here?" "When are they going to go into action?"

A. "They're here to do the two things I mentioned before: to be stationed at important places and add to the defense, and then to participate in battle in what we call combat support of the government forces when it becomes necessary. The details on how to do that are being worked out."

COPY LBJ LIBRARY

6 May 1965

Gen. DePuy-Saigon. Deputy Chief of Staff- Monthly News Briefing

C. I WOULD SAY THERE IS NO REQUIREMENT FOR A JOINT MILITARY COMMAND WITH THE VIETNAMESE, AND I KNOW OF NO PLANS FOR SUCH A COMMAND. WHEN I SAY THERE IS NO REQUIREMENT FOR IT, I SAY IT FOR THIS REASON. WE, IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT WE NOW HAVE MARINE AND ARMY GROUND FORCES IN THE COUNTRY, ARE STILL BASICALLY IN A POSITION OF SUPPORTING THE OPERATIONS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF VIETNAM AND ITS ARMED FORCES. I DON'T THINK THAT ANYBODY OUGHT TO FORGET THAT. WE STARTED OUT A LONG TIME AGO WITH A MAAG OVER

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
NATIONAL MILITARY COMMAND CENTER
MESSAGE CENTER

HERE WITH ADVISORS WHO TAUGHT PEOPLE HOW TO USE U.S. MATERIAL. THEN, AS THE VCC INTENSIFIED THE THING, WE GRADUALLY AND QUITE STEADILY HAVE FED IN HELICOPTERS, THEN FIGHTERS AND THEN EVENTUALLY, AS YOU KNOW BETTER THAN I, A STEADY BUILD UP IN COMBATT SUPPORT, INCLUDING MUCH HELP IN COMMUNICATIONS, LOGISTIC LIFT WITH AIRCRAFT, TROOP LIFT WITH HELICOPTERS, AND AIR SUPPORT NOW INCLUDING JETS. AND THE GROUND FORCES ARE HERE IN EXACTLY THAT SAME CONTEXT. THEREFORE, THE BASIC DECISIONS ARE TAKEN BY THE HIGH COMMAND AND THE GOVERNMENT, AND ALL OF THESE VARIOUS AMERICAN MILITARY ASSETS ARE PLACED IN POSITION AND UNDER GROUND RULES IN WHICH THEY SUPPORT THESE OPERATIONS. AS A MATTER OF FACT, AT A FAIRLY LOW LEVEL. THE MISSION, FOR EXAMPLE, OF THE MARINES AND THE AIRBORNE IS STATED IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY SUPPORT, REALLY, THE CORPS COMMANDER IN WHOSE AREA THEY'R LOCATED. THE MARINES AT DA NANG HAVE A MISSION OF GIVING COMBAT SUPPORT TO GEN THI, WHETHER IT BE FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE AIRFIELD OR RELATED ACTIVITIES. AND IT'S THE SAMEWAY WITH THE PARATROOPERS OVER AT BIEN HOA. THEY HAVE THE MISSION OF GIVING COMBAT SUPPORT TO GEN. VIEN. HE UNDERSTANDS THAT VERY WELL, AND SNPORT IS A RESPECTABLE MILITARY TERM OF LONG STANDING. SO I DON'T SEE ANY REAL NEED FOR A HIPTMKJSZGQCGJ OR SO-CALLED COMBINED COMMAND AT THE MOMENT. IF A GREAT HUGE WAR WERE TO BREAK OUT, THEN I GUESS EVERYONE WILL TAKE ANOTHER LOOK AT THE THING.
I WON'T GET INTO VERY MUCH DETAIL ON THIS ONE. I MEANT EXACTLY WHAT I SAID. THAT THEY'RE HERE TO RENDER COMBAT SUPPORT WHICH

COPY LBJ LIBRARY